

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



BRIAN SCHWEITZER
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STATE OF MONTANA

www.dphhs.mt.gov

January 26, 2007

Ravalli County Board of Commissioners
215 South Fourth St. Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840

RECEIVED

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Ravalli County Board of Commissioners

Dear Board of Commissioners:

Thank you for your letter regarding the increasing costs in providing family planning services, particularly the dramatic increase in contraceptive costs.

The Women's and Men's Health Section (WMHS) shares your concerns on the impact of these price increases. Family Planning clinics throughout Montana have long relied on low-priced oral contraceptives to help offset insufficient funding for other family planning services. The recent increase in contraceptive prices has placed an unsustainable burden on our Title X clinics statewide. Our staff estimates that clinics are facing up to a 90% increase in contraceptive costs in SFY 2007, when compared to the previous year.

Like Ravalli County Family Planning, Title X clinics statewide have been forced to look for savings in other areas of their operations. Such solutions have included raising prices for clients even marginally above the poverty level, reducing clinic hours, and limiting the choice of methods and the amount of pills or patches offered to clients. This has been difficult knowing that having a broad choice of contraceptive methods is important to the successful practice of contraception. As you know, any interruption in women's access to contraception may translate into unintended pregnancy with its associated costs to the community.

In your search for solutions to these funding problems, you mention a desire to be able to charge a minimum co-pay to clients qualifying as zero-pay on the sliding fee scale. Currently, Title X Guidelines do not allow family planning clinics to charge a co-pay [TX 6.3(3)]. Because these guidelines are held in federal statute, the WMHS has no ability or authority to change this regulation. Similarly, although donations or contributions can and should be encouraged, they must be voluntary and cannot be a prerequisite to the provision of services or supplies [TX 6.3(11)].

Title X guidelines specify that family planning clinics must offer a broad range of FDA approved contraceptives (TX 10.2). While clinics have been forced to reduce their

contraceptive formularies statewide, federal guidelines would prohibit a Title X clinic from offering only condoms to its clients.

We do recognize your frustration in providing comprehensive reproductive health services in the face of such staggering cost increases. Since the Federal Title X funding we receive for family planning services in the state has not increased, we are unable to increase funding to clinics. Title X funds in the state are allocated to clinics based on an allocation formula which considers the number of low-income clients served by each clinic. The WMHS has become aware of legislation to be proposed by state Senator Christine Kauffman (D-Helena) requesting state funding for Title X family planning clinics to offset the increased cost of contraception (LC 1611). We encourage all Ravalli County Commissioners to educate your local legislators about this important legislation.

Since Title X guidelines can only be changed at the federal level, and an increase in Title X funds nationally is needed, we also encourage you to educate Montana Senators Baucus and Tester and Representative Rehberg on the issues and the importance of local family planning clinics. We agree that a decrease in family planning services will have a detrimental affect on local and state resources. If change is to happen to Title X guidelines, it must take place at the federal level.

Again, thank you for your concern for your local family planning clinic. We look forward to working together to assure that women in your community are assured access to this very important public health service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen Lindsay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Colleen Lindsay
Supervisor
Women's and Men's Health Section
Family and Community Health Bureau

cc: Joan Miles
Duane Preshinger
Jo Ann Dotson
Judy Griffin